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Correctional Education: Society Essential for Progressive Growth or a Detrimental Use of Taxpayers Money?

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Correctional Education: Society Essential For Progressive Growth Or A Detrimental Use of
Taxpayers Money?

By

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Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of Requirements For The Degree Of Masters Of Public
Administration

Department Of Public Administration

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August ~~19~~, 2014

Approved By: _____

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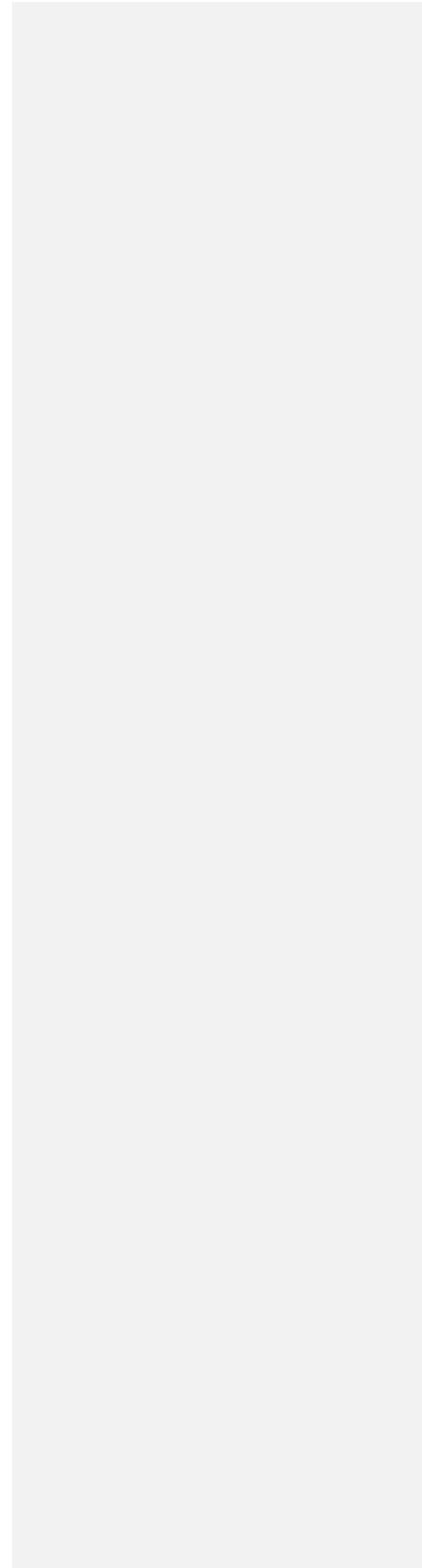
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Abstract

For years, people have debated ~~on~~ whether providing inmates free education made any difference in their rehabilitation at all. Most arguments for inmate education say that if you educate those who are not and who seek to be ~~;~~ better decision making skills will be the result, making a positive effect on recidivism rates in our country. Having the option to educate yourself for anyone who wants to should be the birthright for all. Those against prison education say we should first focus on people who are doing the right thing. Convicted criminals lost their free privileges when they broke the law and should not be rewarded ~~ed~~. The resource should be used elsewhere ~~.~~ benefitting those who contribute in a positive way to society.

~~_____ However, t~~The purpose of this study is to examine how education has an effect on prison recidivism rates, but also on how educating tax-payers on this topic could help resolve the issue. This topic has dated back to “1965 when President Lyndon Johnson signed the higher education act, which allowed inmates to receive Pell grant funding for college courses in 1972” (Esperian J.H.2010. It was stated that “those who go to college while incarcerated are 45% less likely to return to prison than those who do not” (Why college in pri~~eson~~? Wesleyan, 2010) ~~.~~

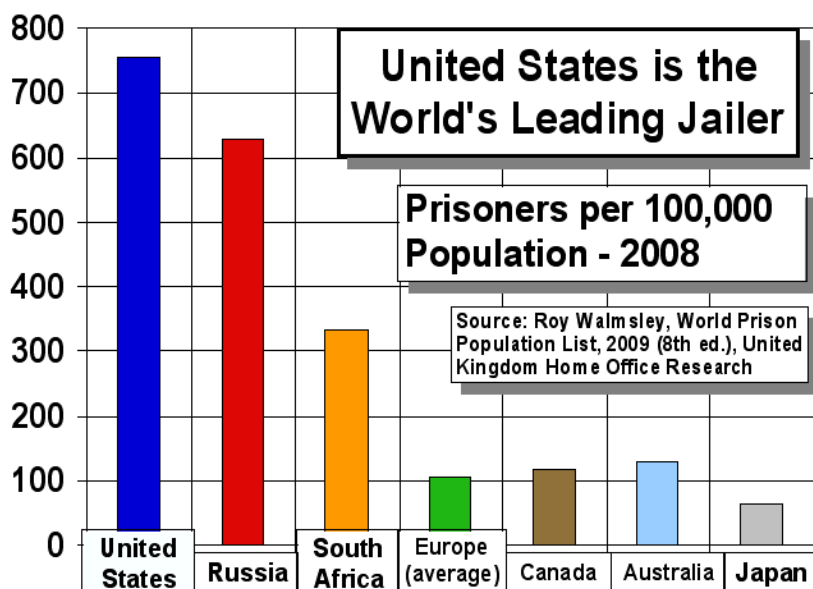
This study examined in detail each side of the debate with supporting statistical data and statements from interviews with inmates, former inmates, conservative idealists, enthusiastic theorists ~~.~~ as well as your average Joe. Comparing and contrasting both arguments in hopes of finding Do inmate education programs help lower recidivism rates? Are criminals using the correctional education system to become better criminals? Is there a solution to this debate that

will make everyone happy? Though we may have already reached the threshold on overly sympathetic humane programs funded by taxpayers and should perhaps take the necessary step to prioritize our approach on how we are spending taxpayers' dollars.

Chapter One: Introduction

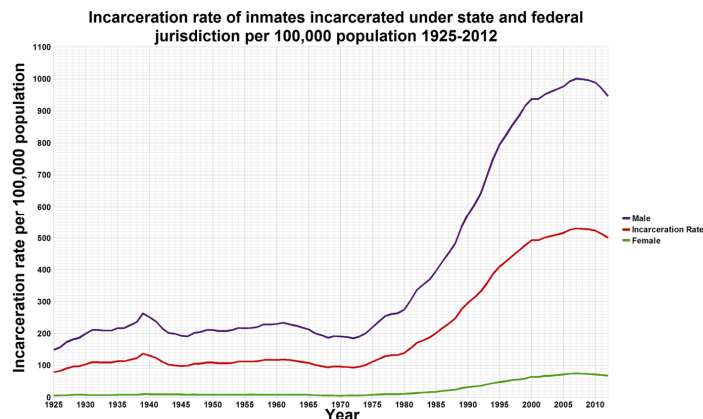
This has been a topic for debate for decades. From as early as 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Higher Education Act, which was one of the first Acts to offer convicted criminals not only opportunities to get educated but also making them eligible to apply and receive taxpayer Funded Pell grants for college courses in 1972. It is believe that “if you provide positive proactive rehabilitative options for inmates there are 45% less likely to return to prison than those who do not. Which will directly cut correctional facilities cost for the states. The Correctional Association estimated that every dollar invested in prison education returns two dollars to the taxpayer.” (Why College in Prison? Wesleyan , 2010). Forbes online noted that “In New York State, forty percent of all inmates who are released will wind up back in prison within three years” (Altschuler, D. 2013). But the main reason for this number being so high is due to the fact that prisoners do not have the building blocks to survive in today’s society. Society cannot deny the facts that correctional facilities that do not offer educational programs have an increase in return inmate compared to facilities that do. The United States is known to be the world leader in jailing its population.

This is shown in Figure 1: Percentage of highest jail rate



The example could be made that if doctors look at HIV as an epidemic, then wardens should feel the same with our incarceration rates. The numbers are only continuing to grow year after year.

Review Figure 2 : Incarceration rate with State & Federal



The main reason for offenders reverting back to their old ways are due to the fact that it is the only way they know how to survive. A Georgetown study (Altschuler, D. 2013) predicted that applicants will need more than a high school diploma to qualify for more than half of all the jobs created in this decade. It also widely believe that it is the single most cause of high recidivism rate, lack of education (Altschuler, D. 2013). Statistics show that about 20% of the general public do not have their high school diploma. However, 40% of prisoners do not have their high school (The Editorial Board, 2014). If one thing can be said, awareness plays a large factor in controlling not only crime, but repeat offenders. Most statistical data show support that prisoners are capable of making it in society if given an opportunity to make oneself aware. “The American Correctional Association has reported that the recidivism rate for GED completers is 20 percent lower than the general prison population rate, and the recidivism rate for college degree completers is 44 percent lower than the general population’s” (Steurer, S., Linton, J.,

Nally, J., & Lockwood, S. 2010). Jason Warr who was incarcerated for murder at the age of 19, entered prison with barely a GCSES Certificate. Jason was able to refocus and make changes to his life and thought process. He had access to one of the inmate education programs and Upon his release 12 years later, Jason received enough credits to get an offer to attend the London School of Economics. Jason was given a second chance and He has since received his degree and is now working on his PHD at the age of 37.

But there is not always a happy ending, there can be tragedy. The New York Times post on an article that the United States holds 25% of the world population in prisons, which would make up 5% of the world population (The Editorial Board, 2014). Taxpayers support nearly a quarter of a percent of the world prison population. Ok, it is humane to feed and house them, but to educate people who have violated rules that were set in place to protect everyone? Most are repeat offenders with no intention of changing at all. They already have free health care, three meals a day and free air condition housing. Most in the world would call this luxury life living. This just may be one of the reasons why the return rate for convicted criminals is so high. Inmates and their associates are realizing that being incarcerated may restrict your freedom to go and come as you please, but that's about it! There are current inmates who were law abiding citizens who ran out option in society and willfully chose to "sign up" for jail sentences; completely aware of the available resources. They are taking advantages of the system and are costing taxpayers a lot of money. A study that was put together in 2011 by Truman Policy Research show that every inmate that leaves the system saves that state an average of \$25,000 per year. Nationwide, more than 650,000 people were released from state prisons in 2010" (Altschuler, D. 2013). Over "one million dollars has been spent on correctional education which has prevented about 600 crimes, while that same invested in incarceration prevents 350 crimes"

(Bazo, A., & Hausman, J. 2004). This is a perfect example of how funds can be saved and used more proactively. The idea is continuously thrown around that funds are not available and have been drastically reduced since the 1990s, but nothing is being done to try a change that. The adult incarceration numbers have steadily rose over the past ten years with inmates who have not taken the opportunity to earn a degree in prison.

Figure 3-: USA Adult incarceration

USA. Adult incarceration.	Number of inmates		
	2000	2009	2010
Inmates in custody			
Total	1,937,482	2,291,912	2,266,832
Federal prisoners ^a	140,064	205,087	206,968
Prisons	133,921	196,318	198,339
Federal facilities	124,540	171,000	173,138
Privately operated facilities	9,381	25,318	25,201
Community Corrections Centers ^b	6,143	8,769	8,629
State prisoners	1,176,269	1,319,391	1,311,136
State facilities	1,104,424	1,224,145	1,216,771
Privately operated facilities	71,845	95,246	94,365
Local jails ^c	621,149	767,434	748,728
Incarceration rate ^d	684	743	731
Adult incarceration rate ^e	926	981	962

Chapter Two: Literature Review

When reviewing the question “How does education affect the recidivism rate within jail systems?” One would first need to know what the meaning of recidivism is. It is explained in an article written by May and Brown called Examining the Effect of Correctional Programming on Perceptions of Likelihood of Recidivism among Incarcerated Prisoners. May explains that recidivism is “the repeated occurrence of an undesirable behavior after an individual has experienced negative consequences for that behavior or has been treated or trained to extinguish that behavior (May, D. C., & Brown, T. 2011). Many would will read that quote and laugh thinking why that quotes so important? But the majority of inmates that go through the jails system are offenders that are simply returning for new offenses.

The key to understanding this main question is to understand why the rate of returning inmates ~~isare~~ so high. “For the past 40 years, one issue that has troubled both scholars and legislators concerns whether or not prison programming is effective in reducing future crime among those receiving the treatment. In other words, after a prisoner receives treatment, how likely is recidivism to occur? A number of studies suggest that, no matter what measure of recidivism is used, approximately half of released inmates return to prison within 3 years of their release (May, D. C., & Brown, T.2011). When reviewing the statistics, the one number that stands out is education. It was stated by Harriet Gagliano that “60% of prison inmates cannot read above the sixth grade level” (Esperian, J. H.2010). With that percentage being shown, the question that needs to be asked is if an offender understands that there are other directions rather than delinquency. However, society has conveyed that if a person is incarcerated that life after

release will be extremely difficult to rebound from. Should we (the government) judge one for the mistakes that he or she has done in the past? From how our past has proven the answer to that question is that we do. This is one of the underlining factors that throw released offenders back into a loop of crime and jail. This is the main reason why educating prisoners that making a mistake in life does not mean the end of the world; showing offenders that mistakes can easily be corrected with some time and effort. It is said that “correctional education is one of the most productive and important reentry services, said Gerry Gaes, noted criminologist and former research director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The federal Second Chance Act is now funding new efforts to prepare inmates for reentry before release. Two of the key elements mentioned in the law are education and employment training, which correctional educators have been providing for years” (Steurer, S., Linton, J., Nally, J., & Lockwood, S. 2010).

To begin this process of rehabilitation it needs to start with the programs being offered within all correctional facilities. Even though at this present time the correctional facilities are trying to make the effort to offer educational classes, but are not making it priority in their goals it seems. The main reason why that statement is valid is because “ (Taxman, Perdoni, and Harrison 2007), in a national survey of prisons, jails, and community corrections agencies, found that substance abuse education and awareness programming was offered in 74% of prisons, while educational programming was offered in 89% of the prisons they surveyed. Segregated therapeutic communities were available in 19% of the prisons they surveyed. (Stephan 2008) determined that 4 in 5 adult facilities offered work programs and 9 in 10 public facilities had academic, counseling, or vocational training programs” (May, D. C., & Brown, T. 2011). This statistics show that even though the classes are being offered the offenders are simply not attending. This is where ideas need to be developed on how to market the programs to be more

appealing to offenders. The idea that we are offering programs and they are not being taken advantage of is mind boggling. Steven Klein of the U S Dept. of Education writes, 'American prisoners have consistently tested at the lowest levels of educational achievement, and at the highest levels of illiteracy and educational disability of any segment in our society.' (Esperian, J. H.2010).

All of the signs are being presented to us and we are taking it with a grain of salt. Our government has passed laws and has put public officials in place to decrease crime after it has happened, but it would make sense to try and prevent crime from even occurring. It was stated in the article by David C. May Staton-Tindall conducted interviews “with 700 offenders from Kentucky who completed prison- or jail-based treatment 1 year after release to determine if the substance abuse programming they had received while incarcerated reduced recidivism during that 12-month period. Found significant differences between baseline (12 months prior to incarceration) and follow-up (12 months after release from custody) substance use. A significantly lower percentage of participants reported illicit drug use at follow-up compared with baseline (43.9% vs. 94.1%). Approximately two thirds (66%) of participants were not incarcerated between release and the time of the follow-up interview. Of those who were incarcerated, the majority (81%) were re-incarcerated on a parole violation” (May, D. C., & Brown, T. 2011). This shows that the programs that are being offered need to provide more substance that will provide offenders an opportunity to have a chance when they are released. It is stated that “recognized factors impact recidivism rates. Among them are : the socio economic stats , effectiveness of post release supervision (for parolees), length of time incarcerated , severity and seriousness of crime committed , access to data which varies from state to state educational level of achievement of each individual. It is understood that as time of follow-up

periods increase, or become less frequent, rates of recidivism grow “(Esperian, J. H.2010). This shows and explains perfectly that as we continue to improve our systems, the likely hood of the recidivism rates will improve along with them.

The key to the providing education within correctional facilities is to provide that individual with more options than what he arrived with. When offenders are released from jail the first thing they will do is go back to what they are comfortable with or what they have simply learned. However, in most cases when things do become rough on the outside and recently released offenders are unable to make a life for themselves, they go back to what got them in to prison. As much as we need to have prisoners attend class, but we need to make sure what is being taught to them is worth learning. Statistics have shown that prisoners that enter jails or prison are more likely to enter into higher learning opportunities and decrease their likelihood of returning to jail. As much as prisoners are looked down upon, we as a society need to pick them up. The basics of going to prison or jail is to start a rehabilitation process, which mean to walk down a path of change. The word change is a small word, but difficult to live up too. To understand the mindset of a person who has the reading level of an 8th grader, with no understanding to life is very dangerous. In the year 1993 the accepted practice of education in correctional facilities where “to provide inmates with basic academic and vocational skills, to provide inmates with an opportunity to change their personal behavior, attitudes and values, to reduce recidivism, to provide passive control of inmate’s behavior and to support the operational needs of correction institution” (Gordon, H. D., & Weldon, B. 2003). After a study was taken with 320 adult males who were released from the West Virginia correctional institution, only 76 recidivist and only 4 who college experience were re-incarcerated. Those five simple steps show that if we provide prisoner with an understanding with what our society is accepting of, the

recidivism rate will fall. There is one state that has a very interesting mandate towards its prisoners that needs to be adopted by all states. It is stated that within Minnesota prisons or jails that correctional education “is mandatory for individuals who do not possess a GED or high school diploma. The duration of the prison sentence, as well as transfers to other prison facilities may seem like roadblocks; however, the education department requires the inmate to participate in the program regardless of circumstances. This requirement often forces inmates who would be less likely to participate in the programs to pursue higher education and potentially earn a GED ensuring that inmates coming into prison will not be overlooked for educational opportunities”(Harlow, Jenkins & Steurer, 2010). Many would wonder why this practice is not all over the country, but the simple answer to that would be there is no funding.

As much as statistics prove that education is the key to reducing the recidivism rate within the jail systems, it cannot be done without sufficient and supported funding. Which leads me into my second question, “How do taxpayers feel about tax money going toward jail education?” Understanding that the only way that correctional facilities are capable of funding program is unless they receive help from the state and federal levels. These two key sectors are responsible if education program exist or not. However, the income that that state and federal government are using to fund the following program are tax payer dollars. In most tax payers mind they think “Why should society "reward" convicted felons for attacking innocent victims by providing the felons with a free education? Some people say that simply locking up criminals and depriving them of their liberty is punishment enough. (Harlow, C., Jenkins, H., & Steurer, S. 2010). In many tax payers eyes it is felt that they should not be held with the burden of educating a person that should be punished for his or her crime. However, this mind set it the norm that society has sent which makes it extremely difficult for released offenders. It is understandable

that one feels that their hard earned money should go to a good cause, but who should be the deciding of that? The question has been argued back and forth for years and has go in different directions with each presidential election. Tax payers have been proven to argue everything once it is not going to something that affects them. It has been argued that taxpayers feel that it is not only wrong, but offensive to the offender's victims' rights to retribution and also sends the wrong message to criminals (Harlow, C., Jenkins, H., & Steurer, S. 2010). The thought is why empowering or trying to improve a person that does not want help. Many have fought this battle for the fact the education for non-offenders is not free and has put some people in bad debt. However, as it stand if you commit a crime you can be sent to a correctional facility and receive free education. Each situation has its own consequence and the individual will need to know which direction they would want to take. The idea of trying to make another person's life better, due to the fact that they made a wrong choice in life does not need to be decided by taxpayers. An article was written in 2014 by Alsonse D'Amato asking if tax funds should be used to provide college education for prisoners within New York. Mr. D'Amato went on to state that "Many young Americans face out-of-control costs for a college education, and are often forced into significant debt. Many of them are the children of hardworking middle-class people who want to ensure that their kids get a college education and are given a chance to succeed. To many New Yorkers, it doesn't seem fair for a prisoner to just get a free ride while law-abiding citizens are forced to take out loans to pay for college" (Davis, L., Bozick, R., Steele, J., Saunders, J., & Miles, J.2013). His thoughts and ideas are 100% correct, but instead of simply looking at the negative aspect of the situation one could simply make a few changes. One of the biggest changes that would allow everyone to pay their taxes easier every day is if each inmate is required that once they graduate and are released that they would need to start paying back the

state for its services. It seems that all the ideas that are being presented are all so negative, but there are much action items to come back with.

Over the years “Between 1980 and 1994 the total number of people held in federal and state prisons and local jails almost tripled-increasing from 501,886 to 1,483,410.”⁸ In the federal prisons alone, the prison population was 94,827 in 1994, while the rated capacity of the facilities was 66,900. Between June 1994 and June 1995, the combined state and federal prison population increased 8.8%, “which is the equivalent of 1,719 new prison beds every week and by December 1995, “the federal prison system had 26% more inmates than the institutions should hold based on standards adopted by the Bureau of Prisons.” In addition, the majority of state prisons are overcrowded as well (Harlow, C., Jenkins, H., & Steurer, S. 2010). The following statistics show that over a decade the population for prison on the state and federal level are increasing at an accelerated rate. At this rate our society will be faced with astronomical numbers by the year 2020. Taxpayers need to understand that if they are already paying to house inmates, the amount to educate them is a nickel in the bag. Governor Cuomo “was quick to point out that the cost \$5,000 per inmate per year is a fraction of the \$60,000 New York spends annually to house a prisoner. But even more compelling is the weight of decades of data according to a RAND study released last summer (Davis, L., Bozick, R., Steele, J., Saunders, J., & Miles, J. 2013). Reviewing 30 years of research, inmates who participated in educational programs had a substantially reduced risk of reoffending within three years than those who did not (The Editorial Board, 2014). As a taxpayer it should be understood that funding is already covering housing for inmates, what is the difference if education is being offered into the program as well. What needs to be realized that not only are hard American workers paying into the system, but so are newly released inmates. In today’s society we as a country need to realize that mistakes occur on

all levels and people need to be provided with a second chance. However, the questions begin to be asked whether prisoners have a constitutional right to education or rehabilitation? It was stated that in that “prisoners possess neither a fundamental nor a constitutional right to education. In *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, the Supreme Court stated that education, of course, is not among the rights afforded explicit protection under our Federal Constitution. Nor do we find any basis for saying it is implicitly so protected. Drawing on this, federal circuit courts have upheld this standard in the realm of prison education. There are those, however, that argue that a constitutional right to rehabilitation should be extended to prisoners.”(Greene, M. K. 1998). The fact that this was decided showed that things needed to be changed and soon was in 1982. It was then decided that all inmates need to be capable of reading at a sixth grade level or they would be enrolled into a mandatory adult reading program. It has since increased to a high school level and should continue to rise. The correction system should not only be there to lock inmates away from society, but also show them that crime is not the only way.

This system was designed to help rid our communities of crime, but also try and rehabilitate people that simply need to have their lives turned around. The correctional facility does not only cater to society to remove prisoners from the streets, but it was designed to stop the vicious cycle. When this question is asked to any tax payer within the United States it should be followed by what is the purpose of criminal law? It stated that “Prisons punish individuals for their crimes. Theories of punishment are supposed to serve as general justifications for the practice of punishment as a whole. If punishment is exacted upon an individual where it lacks purpose, it is thought to be cruel. Likewise, to determine whether education should be part of the prison curriculum, one must ask whether its presence and use are justified and whether its use

falls within the theory or purpose of criminal law (Greene, M. K.1998). When one looks deep in the meaning of Criminal law it will show that it displays the following four purposes: retribution, deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation. All four terms have great purposes, but the one that stands out the most is rehabilitation. When one hears the term rehabilitation, the first idea that comes to mind is a person that is hurt or injured. However, when looking at most criminal activity, most researchers have come to the decision that most criminal are ill and need help. This paper does not approve criminal activity from any individual, but the idea if someone needs help it should be offered. An article was quoted stating that “Retribution and rehabilitation have taken turns as the predominant enological theories in the United States throughout the last century In the 1991 Supreme Court decision of Harmelin v. Michigan, Justice Kennedy stated that the federal and state criminal systems have accorded different weights at different times to the enological goals of retribution, deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation (Greene, M. K. 1998). If the idea could be looked at that tax payers are not simply throwing money away, but investing in the longevity of safer comminutes. Statistics are continuing to be released that recidivism rate has decreased with the factor of education.

What should be looked at and focused more on is how life for prisoners upon release with an education from jail? The main purpose for looking and reviewing this question is for the fact that if newly released inmates are unable to find careers upon release, there would be no point in funding an education program. The main purpose of this topic and policy is so that offenders are not only able to support themselves, but are also are able to stay out of trouble within society. It is a fact that society has decided that once a person has gone to jail that their life should be deemed hell for the rest of their life. However, it has been stated and arguments have still been disputed that “Various studies have found a link between education and lower recidivism rates,

including a Federal Bureau of Prison study estimating that 4.2 percent fewer offenders who successfully participated in at least one education course per each six months of their prison term were arrested or had their paroles revoked after three years of release compared to those who did not take the same number of education courses” (Matsuyama, K., & Prell, L. 2010, August).

Study’s and reports are continuing to rise to the surface showing that 23 % of inmates that attend any education program are able to stay out of trouble upon release (Matsuyama, K., & Prell, L.2010, August). The ICW was able to run reports over a 10 year span that covered over three thousand inmate that had been released from the Iowa department of correction facility. The numbers that are shown is strong evidence that education is not only the key to decreasing recidivism rates, but also increasing job employment upon release back into society. The reports show that there was a drop in 2009, but that was a year that affected everyone with recession market. The study shows that inmates leaving with GED are likely obtain a steady time of employment, but any inmate that received any degree higher the likely hood increased. It was stated that “offenders who obtained a high school diploma or GED (with the majority achieving the latter) had higher employment rates for each of the post-release quarters compared to offenders with less than a high school diploma and no GED; differences were statistically significant for each quarter of the three-year follow-up period, even for the first quarter of 2009 during which the sharp drop in employment is most likely due to the current recession. If the following stats could be provided on a regular basis, one could argue why there aren’t more education programs being offered in prisons” (Matsuyama K., & Prell, L. 2010, August).

Many would think that it is obvious that a person with an education compared to a person without an education is more likely to obtain a better job. The misconception is simply because that person has been incarcerated and the norm is that they become a risk. Once again if we as a

whole would have a different mentality this paper would be meaningless. It was stated that “with high school diplomas or GEDs earned consistently higher wages for each of the post-release quarters compared to offenders with less than a high school diploma and no GED. In the years prior to incarceration, wages for the diploma/GED group were still higher than but closer to the no diploma/no-GED group; however, post-incarceration wages for the diploma/GED group were markedly higher, and they were closer to wages for the college-educated group” (Matsuyama, K., & Prell, L.2010).

If our government does not soon come to an understanding that education should become more of a standard within our correctional facilities, you will continue to see crime rates consistently trend on the high level.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This applied research study will utilize summative evaluation research methods to examine and study correctional education programs in the United States of America. The research will focus on whether prison education makes a positive influence on our inmate, improving recidivism rate or is the prison taxpayer funded programs being misuse to help criminals who have no intention of changing by answering the following questions:

1. Do inmate education programs help lower recidivism rate?
2. Are criminals using the correctional education system to become better criminals?
3. Is there a solution to this debate that will make everyone happy?

3.1 Data Collection:

Data will be collected by interviews with former inmates, conservative idealists, and enthusiastic theorists as well as your average Joe. The data will be collected to answer the following questions:

1. Do inmate education programs help lower recidivism rate?

This question will have one method of questioning by interviewing inmates, former inmates, friends, family, church members and co-workers. In order to answer this, it will be necessary to ask them the following questions:

- Have you ever been arrested?

- If so, Have you or anyone you know ever been incarcerated for more than 24 months?
- Do you think bad people can change?
- How do you think we can help those who are repeat offenders to change their paths?
- Do you know of anyone or have you participated in a offering correctional educational programs?
- Do you know of anyone or have you completed an offering correctional educational programs?

2. Are criminals using the correctional education system to become better criminals?

Data will be collected by an interview with inmates, former inmates and friends. In search for the answers on the whether criminals are using the correctional education system to enhance their criminal plots in the following questions:

- Do you think society care about those who have been convicted of a crime?
- Do you believe that if given an opportunity most inmate will refrain from returning to prison once release?
- Do think inmates progressively gain knowledge through the system enabling them to commit more devastating crimes?

3. Is there a solution to this debate that will make everyone happy?

This question will be answered by interviewing church members, my family, inmates, former inmates and friends.

- How do you think we can help our society in regards of dealing with crime and criminal activities?

- Is the current laws and offering for rehabilitation to prisoners effective?

Chapter Four: Findings

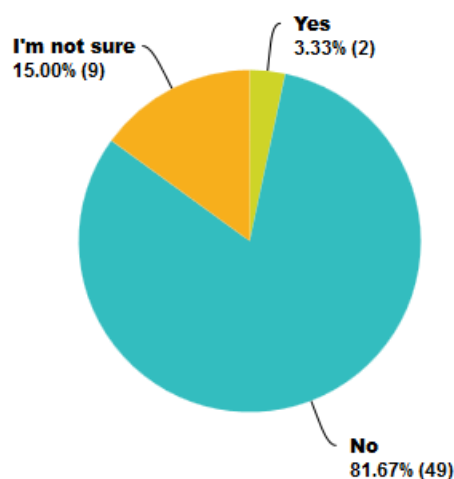
In this chapter the findings of the data collected are displayed. The data were assembled and arranged in order to respond to the problems raised in chapter 1 of this debate. The goals were to establish knowledge of if inmate education programs help lower recidivism rates as well as determining whether criminals are using the correctional education system to become better criminals in manipulating the governmental system and if there is a solution to this debate that will make everyone happy.

4.1 Survey:

The survey (appendix) used design base Survey Monkey. Over two hundred (200) people were sent the survey within New York State with 10 questions and only sixty (61) were received back completed within two weeks.

The respondents were asked: “Do you know how much money you are contributing to prison education?” 48 selected the answer No (around 82%). 9 selected Not Sure (around 15%) and 2 selected (Yes around 3%).

Figure 4: knowing how much contributed to prison education

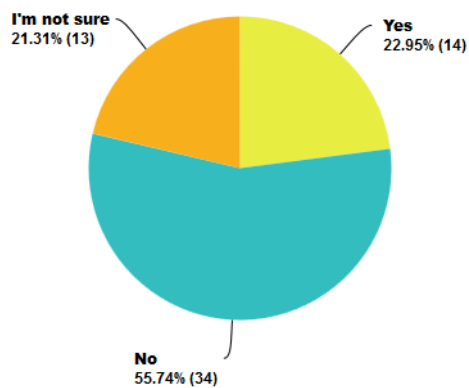


N=60

The second question asked in survey 1 was Do you think inmates progressively gain knowledge through the system enabling them to commit more devastating crimes? This question was then analyzed with the number of responses that indicated that they were inmates and former inmates. Of 60 people the results displayed that 34 people stated that No, adding “making people ‘smarter’ does not make them resort to doing negative things that can affect them and their love ones negatively”(around 56%). Fourteen people answered Yes, adding “I know of a number of inmates there just for the free housing and meals,” “Some even communicate with other inmates about new criminal techniques and schemes to try” (about 23%). Thirteen people answered Not Sure (about 21%). This may be a small sample but the results here consistently show society is still unsure on whether

prison rehabilitation tactics are actually working. Out of those (5) who indicated they were inmates or former inmates, three answered yes and two said Not Sure.

Figure 5 : Percentage of knowledge gain through the system



Respondents were asked do you know the recidivism rates for inmates who receive a degree within prison or jail; 77% Yes said, about 23% said Not Sure.

Fourth question and the fifth question ask respondents how you think we can help our society in regards to dealing with crime and criminal activities. And how do you think we can help those who are repeat offenders to change their paths? Out of 60, 58 people mentioned education or teaching as a key cornerstone to rehabilitation, adding “smarter people means smarter decisions” and “people just need a chance to see that there's other opportunities out there.” Out of those who were inmates and former inmates all five indicted being trained with a skill to get a job or having access to free programs due to lack of funds as ways they would attack the issue.

The sixth question was Do you think bad people can change? After reviewing the statistics 45 people (about 76%) said Yes, 8 people (around 14%) said Not Sure and 7 people answered No (10%). The results show that most people do believe people can change. Most people believe people deserve to have second chances and most would agree that it's due to bad circumstances and/or associated mental and/or physical disorders that helps diminish the progress of those who are trying desperately to better themselves. Most in the prison system are there because they just haven't been offered any opportunity to better themselves as yet.

The seventh, eighth and ninth questions asked Have you ever been arrested? Do you know of anyone or have you participated in correctional educational programs? Do you know of anyone or have you completed correctional educational programs? 92% of participants answered No to the arrest inquiry, the other 8% who answered yes were the participating inmates and former inmates. Those who knew participants of the correctional educational programs say that the programs are only offered to a particular population in prison, adding that inmates are subject to the warden's discretion no matter how qualified for the program they may be. Those who knew of someone who completed a program said that most went on to either get a job or open their own small business as a way to help change their situation. All five participating inmates agreed that these programs were helping those who participated.

The tenth question simply asked do you think society will be affected in a negative way with inmates receiving a higher education. Sixty percent (36) of the participants said No, 25% answered yes and 15% were Not Sure. All participating inmates and former inmates replied No, adding once labeled a criminal, your life is essentially over. People look down upon and really think less of ex-cons and that's because the perception is that all prisoners are "evil" and that these are generally bad people.

4.2 Interviews

The second part of this study included interviews conducted with former inmates. The interviews were conducted over the phone and in person and the questions were based on their views on whether offering education to inmates made a difference in reducing recidivism rates.

Interview I

The first interview was conducted with the five current or former inmates and two friends who said that:

- Most inmates are subject to their particular circumstances and often follow the footsteps of respected elders before them or currently with them.
- Although many inmates appear to be mean, thug-like individuals, most are really good people who have just made a single mistake, wrongfully accuse and just in the wrong place at the wrong time.
- Participants of the correctional educational programs generally complete the programs and get out of prison and turn their life around.

Interview II

The second interview was conducted with Deputy Commissioner Justin Pruyne of Westchester County who stated:

- Through our partnership with BOCES, WCDOC offers high school level educational programs to adult inmates and mandates that all youthful offenders attend class.

- As a snapshot, in June, 2014, these services were provided to 84 youthful offenders and 195 adults.
- The WCDOC offers other significant programming opportunities (violence reduction, substance abuse counseling, 'boot camp' for minors and certain vocational training).
- The curriculum utilized by BOCES is consistent with curriculum being used in traditional community-based educational systems.
- Because attendance by adults is voluntary, the individuals who choose to pursue these opportunities are generally trying to better themselves for an eventual return to their home communities.
- The Westchester County Department of Corrections does not offer college courses that allow inmates to receive their bachelors or masters at this time.
- As a local jail (as opposed to a state prison), the length of stay for individuals confined to our custody is significantly shorter (an average of approximately 45-60 days, as compared to many years for state-sentenced prisoners).
- In a given year, WCDOC processes approximately 9,000 people in and out of custody. Accordingly, this abbreviated length of stay and high turnover would make meaningful pursuit of advanced degrees unfeasible.
- The funds for the programs are currently utilized in many ways, including for our inmate programs and associated expenditures (equipment, books, etc.).
- WCDOC believes that meaningful participation in appropriate programs by inmates can reduce recidivism.
- I would imagine this is a civil service issue; BOCES would be a more appropriate point of contact.

- While grant funds are the most optimal stream of funding for inmate programming, it is often necessary for most correctional agencies to use public funds to support programs (as there are very few ways for jails and prisons to generate revenue and independently support such programs).

Interview III

The third interview was conducted with an educational provider within the Westchester County correctional facility, who perhaps had the best insight of the potential of the programs. It was explained that the programs:

- Earn credits leading to high school diploma from student's local school district; completion of coursework leading to test for High School Equivalency certification [formerly GED]; adult basic education classes; adult ESL classes; preparation for NYS Regents Examinations
- Coursework is taught by experience highly qualified [appropriately certified] instructional staff. In addition, instructional and clinical staff work collaboratively to prepare students for their return to the community
- For 16-year-olds, attending school is compulsory. For 17- to 21-year-olds, student enrollment is on a voluntary basis. Preponderance of students from 17-21 pursue acquisition of HSE [GED] certification. Hard to determine exactly what type of inmates pursue education or their reasons. Good guess might be opportunity for a second chance to earn a high school diploma or its equivalent or just something to do.
- Correctional facilities are not set up for adding offering college courses that give all inmates a chance to get their bachelors or masters, i.e., classroom space, labs, library, instructional staffbut it does offer an interesting extension to earning a high school

diploma or its equivalent...May be larger societal issues to argue here....free college education for people who have committed crimes against society on the one hand vs. proactive alternative view of rehabilitation that may have some real value

- Our enrollment is down. Could be judicial system is coming up with more creative ways to rehabilitate individuals who commit crimes at an early age.
- Teachers are hired from any public school. Submit an application attesting to their experience, attach certification. Candidates are called for interviews. In some cases they might have to do a demonstration lesson. References are checked etc.
- We're getting more creative about how to educate everyone. Inmates should be recipients of these efforts. Society owes it to itself.

Chapter Five: Data Analysis

Through the data collected through the survey and interviews, most people honestly believe that education should be offered with-in correctional facilities. The idea of providing a better service to individuals that have made mistakes during their lives does go over well with society. The data that was gathered proves that people do understand the importance of education and what it is capable of doing. During the interviews most people felt that our government should be more helpful in providing aid to the following. They should not be solely relying on funding through taxpayers dollars. Some of the interviewees felt that the Pell Grant should be reintroduced to try and help support funding educational programs. The people believe that there was a reason why acts such the Higher Education Act were passed in 1965. However, one thing that can be determined is that the majority of people who participated in this survey do not understand what recidivism is or how education can cause rates to decrease. This is something that needs to be addressed not only through our government, but also our local public administrators. As much as the blame needs to be placed on our country for not providing a better education plan in place, but the people that should really play a large role in this process should be our public administrators. The best way to provide awareness to communities is to incorporate the idea into campaigns. This is one of many ideas that could be implemented to help in resolving a small issue. An issue that can easily be corrected with some time. The fact that there is data that proves education can cause a substantial drop in the returns rate for prison offenders, should be made known to the public. However, the data received from the survey shows that the majority have no idea. Most of the answers that were received were simply “I’m not sure or what is that?” Responses such as these clearly point to-out a disconnect with our

Comment [01]: Public administrators or public officials?

Comment [02]: Political campaigns? How would you do that?

overall government communication system. The facts are very simple and are clear ~~as -ent-~~ to what needs to be done. The question that needs to be asked is what will be done to make our communities more aware of this issue?

Throughout this entire paper each article and statement leads each reader to believe that we (the government) understand how to decrease recidivism rates, but there is something stopping it from happen. This topic will continue to convey to the public that the idea to add education to prisons and jails is a good thing, but is lacking state and federal funding. However, what will be displayed in this section of this paper is how many people in this sample really feel that their hard earned tax money should go towards education within correction facilities. Several studies show that “the prison education programs significantly reduce crime and that education participants who are released are 10 to 20 percent less likely to re-offend than the average prisoner” (Bazo, A., & Hausman, J. 2004).

Surprisingly the ~~resultsfinds~~ that were found within the survey and interviews did not match 100% to what reports and articles ~~that~~ have documented. However, there are several aspects that could ~~explainbe the culprit into~~ why the results were not completely the same in certain areas. The area that did not match with the findings from the survey and interview was the overall outlook on education within prisons. Alfonso D’Amato was asked if tax funds should be used to provide college education for prisoners within New York? Mr. D’Amato went on to state that “Many young Americans face out-of-control costs for a college education, and are often forced into significant debt. Many of them are the children of hardworking middle-class people who want to ensure that their kids get a college education and are given a chance to succeed. To many New Yorkers, it doesn’t seem fair for a prisoner to just get a free ride while law-abiding citizens are forced to take out loans to pay for college” (Davis, L., Bozick, R.,

Comment [03]: You have to be careful not to generalize from your small sample.

Steele, J., Saunders, J., & Miles, J.2013). When reviewing the survey data, the question that was asked was “Do you agree to use taxpayer’s money to fund educational programs within jails or prisons?” The data showed that seventy seven percent of people felt that taxpayer’s money should be used to fund educational programs. But when looking at this data only sixty one participants responded out of a hundred and fifty, which may lead to some questions on how reliable is this data is. However, if there is one thing that can increase the reliability it is that each individual that took this survey has received their bachelor’s degree in one of many fields. This should show that each individual s that took part in this survey understands s the importance of education, but more important they are all tax paying citizens. Besides this one area, the data does indeed match what was presented in the literature review.

Comment [O4]: That’s not 77%

After reviewing the following survey statistics, a one could come to the conclusion that education for inmates is a serious topic. However, the best way to provide a better understanding of this topic would be to see what people in the field think about it. While reviewing each article on this topic, a it seems that we know what the problem is, but we simply choose to find excuses on how not fix it. The survey that was conducted not only shows how little our society knows about this topic, but also shows that if we did know more, a it would help. The stats that were established for the following survey shows s that education does not only need to be given to prisoners, but it also need to be given to society. As it was stated in the literature, a society is based off the norm that is seen on a daily basis. Until we the people change the norm that is understood by society, a things will never change. Once society sees education for prisoners as a normal part of the world, this is when you will notice a change.

The educator from the Westchester County correctional facility explained it the best that when asked the question: does he believe that taxpayers should fund education program within

correctional facilities? His response was “Yes.....We’re getting more creative about how to educate everyone. Inmates should be recipients of these efforts. Society owes it to itself.” This sentence stands out and provides a strong meaning behind it. Maybe the direction that policymakers need to take is looking into simply just making sure that inmates receive their GED. The key factor is that the cost will not be as significant compared to college credits and it still provides the building blocks to success.

Chapter Six: Conclusion & Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion:

How would you like to do it differently?

In closing, the data that was received was a great representation of how the majority of people really feel towards this topic. However, some areas that could have been improved are

- Introducing a larger demographic area to the survey
- Interviewing more public officials and administrators
- Being able to discuss this topic with incarcerated inmates

The following areas would have provided a better sense to why this issue is not being addressed as an urgent matter. The data that was presented breaks the surface in showing that taxpayers are slightly aware, but still need to be educated on the problem. The key to resolving this issue is to understand how this problem affects everyone. Not only does society need to stop looking at things in black and white, but understand that anyone can be placed into this situation. The number of survey's that were received back was a picture painted by itself. One could make the determination that the reason why the response rate was so low was due to that fact that most people feel that this topic does not affect them personally. If there was a better connection, that would allow people to see why this survey was important and the turnaround rate may have been higher. If this research paper could have been done differently, the first thing that would have been done is to conduct interviews with newly released and incarcerated inmates on how they feel about education. This would provide a better sense to find out if the issue is really all on our government's end or is it simply that inmates find no interest in taking educational courses. This would be information that could break this topic wide open, with understanding

why the number is not drastically improving. The second area that would help in solidifying this topic would have been to branch out to other facilities, such as State and Federal prisons. These two locations not only provide a larger demographic to interview, but also have different procedures, policies and programs. This would allow for different responses and data collection. The better perspective that is given allows readers to understand ing how important the issue really is.

This paper shows different views of fr one situation and not all solutions given will correct the problem. As a society we have the best intentions in rehabilitating those who are incarcerated, but the only way to really understand is to show how incarceration directly affects inmate's lives. In reality this issue affects every person within the United States. The real problem that is plaguing our species is that most people want to go along with the masses and individuality is looked down upon. The fact that most people grow up only knowing what they are surrounded by and very few especially those within the prison system see a life outside their neighborhood. Education should be something given to all without hesitation and should not depend on circumstance. The fact that we as a society use the argument that "our children are put into debt because of education, so why should a person who has committed a crime receive it for free?" is thinking very close-minded. As an educated society we should be able to not only see one side to the story, but understand the benefit it will have on our communities. The idea that education could be the key to controlling American crime is unbelievable. Something as simple as a knowledge can give someone a different perspective which can be the difference between incarceration and freedom.

6.2 Recommendations

The idea of education in correctional facilities should be supported because most prisoners are incarcerated because of lack of resources. If more policies could be passed to provide not only funding, but resources, this could help in many different areas. One of the main reasons why this topic has such a difficult time reaching society is due to a lack of communication. Our policymaker's need to understand what the problem is and the correct steps in making sure that issue is being addressed. The key to successfully seeing results to this problem is to make sure that the awareness level is at its maximum point. Society needs to change ~~theirs~~ ways in which they look at those imprisoned, and understand that most are from low income households in highly populated areas with little to no funding to schools, ~~W~~which keeps the cycle of high crime and low college acceptances. If we are not willing to participate in the effort to help correct a problem, then ~~issues~~ cannot be expected ~~for issues~~ to resolve themselves.

Comment [05]: There's a problem with this argument which I alluded to in the last draft. Most inmates didn't finish high school so are not eligible for college. Also you are overlooking the high level of mental illness among criminals.

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Appendix

Survey Questions:

- Have you ever been arrested?
- If so, Have you or anyone you know ever been incarcerated for more than 24 months?
- Do you think bad people can change?
- How do you think we can help those who are repeat offenders to change their paths?
- Do you know of anyone or have you participated in a offering correctional educational programs?
- Do you know of anyone or have you completed an offering correctional educational programs?
- Do you think society care about those who have been convicted of a crime?
- Do you believe that if given an opportunity most inmate will refrain from returning to prison once release?
- Do think inmates progressively gain knowledge through the system enabling them to commit more devastating crimes?
- Is the current laws and offering for rehabilitation to prisoners effective?

Interview Questions

- Do you know how much money is being use to fund correctional education programs?
- How much do you think it cost to house 1 inmate within a correctional facility?

- Do you think the recidivism rates is lower for inmates who receive a degree within prison?
- Do you think Taxpayer's money should be use to benefit others not inmates?
- Do you think lack of opportunity contribute to higher recidivism rate?
- Do you think society will be affected in a positive way with inmates receiving education?
- Do you think society will be affected in a negative way with inmates receiving education?